

Ukraine Priority Brief

Provide a decision-ready summary of why Ukraine remains a U.S. national security priority, what “winning” means, and what changes in U.S. policy are required to achieve it.

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Key Takeaways

- **America-First logic:** Ukraine is the most cost-effective way to prevent a bigger, longer security burden on the United States and protect U.S. focus for China and the Western Hemisphere.
- **What “winning” means:** Ukraine can deny further Russian gains and impose costs that force an end to the war on acceptable terms without open-ended U.S. commitments.
- **Top needs now:** layered air and missile defense; aviation to mitigate glide-bomb threats; unmanned systems at scale; EW resilience; long-range strike; sustainment.
- **Top U.S. policy shifts:** arm Ukraine to the teeth with measured, affordable, time-bound support; move legacy inventory now; co-produce and invest in battlefield-proven Ukrainian drone/counter-drone capacity with U.S. loopback; enforce maximum-impact economic pressure.
- **Cost of inaction:** weak or under-scaled action signals permission, invites “death by a thousand cuts,” and risks handing drone-era innovation to hostile coalitions.

1. Why Ukraine is the Priority

Ukraine is the most cost-effective way to prevent a bigger, longer security burden on the United States. An end to the war on Russian terms would not end the problem — it would expand it: a more aggressive Russia, a more unstable Europe, and a larger deterrence requirement that competes directly with U.S. priorities in the Indo-Pacific and the Western Hemisphere. The America-First move is to **arm Ukraine to the teeth** with measured, affordable, and time-bound support, enough for Ukraine to impose a decisive battlefield reality and force an end to the war on acceptable terms. That kind of strength rolls back escalation pressure, restores deterrence credibility, and frees U.S. focus for China and the Western Hemisphere, while accelerating U.S. readiness through munitions scale, rapid procurement, and drone-era lessons.

2. What “Winning” Means

PTSI defines Ukrainian victory as an outcome in which Ukraine can **reliably deny Russia further gains** and **impose costs** that make continued aggression militarily futile and economically unsustainable. **Winning means creating a decisive battlefield reality that forces an end to the war on acceptable terms, without open-ended U.S. commitments.**

Winning means:

1. **Denied conquest:** Russia cannot advance or hold gains at acceptable cost.
2. **Denied coercion:** Russia cannot use sustained strikes and terror to force political outcomes.
3. **Restored deterrence:** Russia is forced to stop and is discouraged from renewed offensives.
4. **This framing is practical:** it focuses on measurable battlefield effects and the deterrence outcome that follows.

3. The Strategic Problem

Modern warfare in Ukraine is defined by rapid adaptation cycles, high-rate production, and the interplay of drones, electronic warfare, air defense, fires, and sustainment. Outcomes are driven less by symbolic announcements and more by **tempo** — the ability to field capability at scale, maintain stocks, and out-iterate the adversary.

The war requires:

1. Speed of delivery and fielding
2. Resilient supply chains and sustainment
3. Mass and precision in unmanned systems
4. Adaptation under pressure

A strategy that moves slowly signals permissiveness. A strategy that scales and enforces consequences changes the aggressor's calculus.

4. What Ukraine Needs Now

PTSI prioritizes support that is battlefield-relevant, scalable, and sustainable, focused on capability categories rather than sensitive specifics.

Top capability priorities

1. **Air and missile defense** - to protect cities, infrastructure, and forces; preserve economic continuity; layered defenses against missiles, drones, and other air threats
2. **Aviation** - to help defend the sky, mitigate glide-bomb threats, and extend operational reach where appropriate
3. **Unmanned systems at scale** - drones and counter-drone capabilities — the primary front-line technology shaping contact, survivability, and tempo; requires rapid iteration and high-rate production
4. **Electronic warfare resilience** survivability in contested spectrum; hardened communications and navigation resilience
5. **Long-range strike** - to hold critical military assets at risk, disrupt logistics, and impose costs
6. **Sustainment and readiness** - stocks, repair, training pipelines, logistics, and replacement rates

The common requirement: **scale, continuity, and speed** support must arrive fast enough and consistently enough to matter.

5. What U.S. Policy Must Change

PTSI's doctrine emphasizes execution: move fast, scale hard, and enforce consequences. Support should be **measured, affordable, and time-bound**, structured to achieve decisive effects quickly, reduce long-term U.S. exposure, and strengthen U.S. readiness through real-world learning and production scale.

A. Prioritize immediate battlefield impact

- **Air defense first:** surge systems and interceptors where applicable, and expand layered defenses against drones and other air threats. There is no substitute for protecting cities and critical infrastructure.
- **Move legacy equipment now:** prioritize transfer of usable legacy systems and components (EDA and other available stocks) that the U.S. will not rely on for future force design but can materially strengthen Ukraine today.
- **Tempo over symbolism:** deliver at a predictable cadence so Ukraine can plan, train, and sustain operations. No one wins on irregular bursts.

B. Scale drones and counter-drone with a U.S. loopback

- **Co-produce and invest with Ukraine's manufacturers** to expand unmanned systems at scale, this is the front-line technology that holds the line.
- **Accelerate counter-drone and air-base defense** capabilities alongside Ukraine support; the same technologies will be essential for protecting U.S. forces, bases, and critical sites.
- **Treat Ukraine as a high-tempo learning environment:** shorten iteration cycles and bring the best lessons back into U.S. readiness and procurement.

(Note: Aviation requirements are addressed in a separate brief available upon request.)

C. Economic pressure that bites

- Apply **targeted, maximum-impact** measures that reduce war revenue and access to critical inputs.
- **Enforcement is strategy:** unenforced measures become permission.
- Focus on actions that change the aggressor's calculus, not long lists of low-impact steps.

D. Allied burden-sharing through material investment

- Lead by example and press European partners to match it with **material support and strategic investment**, not indefinite statements.
- Prioritize allied contributions toward **air defense** and **investment in Ukraine's drone and counter-drone sector**, where scale and speed matter most.
- Reinforce the principle: commitments require contributions.

E. Oversight and accountability that accelerates outcomes

- **Measure execution, not rhetoric:** establish regular public reporting on delivery tempo, sustainment bottlenecks, and implementation obstacles so Congress can intervene when progress stalls.
- **Fund what works:** direct investment toward credible, high-quality firms with battlefield-tested products and demonstrated delivery performance, so resources concentrate on proven capability and measurable results.
- Use independent oversight mechanisms where appropriate to verify delivery, performance, and follow-through without slowing the speed required to win.

What success looks like

The indicators of progress include:

- **Reduced effectiveness of Russia's strike-and-coercion campaign** against cities and critical infrastructure through layered defenses and improved survivability.
- **Sustained high-tempo fielding and production** of drones, counter-drone, and EW resilience, faster iteration and scale over time.
- **Reduced Russian ability to sustain offensive operations** as costs rise and logistics and launch capacity are held at risk.

6. Cost of Inaction

Insufficient action to stop Russia's aggression has already imposed real costs and damaged deterrence credibility. Further inaction or under-scaled action signals impunity to Russia and other bad actors: they may avoid direct attacks on U.S. territory, but they will press everywhere else through escalation, sabotage, and hybrid warfare where the pain is real and the response

is harder. That is the path to “death by a thousand cuts” — more instability in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia; more disruptions to trade and energy; and a growing burden on U.S. attention and resources across multiple theaters.

If Russia is not stopped, it will continue exporting coercion and capability, supporting and enabling other hostile actors, sharing lessons, and expanding the tools of modern conflict that target U.S. interests. A strong, decisive response in Ukraine changes the global signal: aggression fails, costs are immediate, and escalation is punished. That is how deterrence is restored and how future conflicts are prevented rather than managed.

There is also a technology cost to inaction. Ukraine has become a high-tempo innovation hub for drone-era warfare. If Ukraine is crushed or constrained on Russian terms, those capabilities, production networks, and battlefield-proven lessons risk falling into Russian hands and then into the hands of China and other adversaries they choose to arm. That outcome would both strengthen hostile coalitions and deny the United States the opportunity to learn, adapt, and build these advantages into U.S. readiness at home.

Deterrence is not preserved by statements. It is preserved by visible capability, sustained execution, and enforceable consequences.

7. Responses to Common Objections (FAQ)

Isn't stronger support escalatory?

Weak, ambiguous, or under-scaled support often increases risk by signaling hesitation and permission—performative help that suggests the free world is not serious and can be outlasted. That prolongs the war, invites further tests of resolve, and raises escalation pressure over time. Decisive, battlefield-relevant capability that denies gains and imposes costs is the most credible path to end aggression and reduce escalation incentives.

Is this a “forever war”?

A “forever war” is what happens when policy is slow, symbolic, and under-resourced. The objective is a durable outcome where aggression fails, Ukraine can defend itself, and deterrence is restored, so the war ends on acceptable terms rather than being managed indefinitely.

Shouldn't Europe carry more of the burden?

Yes. Allied contributions are essential to deterrence. U.S. leadership should drive European surge support and production scaling, especially air defense and investment into Ukraine's drone and counter-drone capacity, so burden-sharing is material, not rhetorical.

Why not push immediate negotiations?

Negotiations only work when the reality on the ground creates incentives for both sides to settle. Ukraine has signaled readiness to end the war on acceptable terms; Russia has not, because it believes it can gain more through continued military action than through diplomacy. Real negotiations become possible when Russia is no longer in a position to achieve its objectives. That is when a decisive battlefield reality changes the incentives.

Should the U.S. avoid weakening Russia because it could become more dependent on China?

A weaker Russia may become more economically dependent on China, but that does not mean a stronger Russia would align with the free world. Russia–China alignment is driven primarily by ideological and strategic hostility to U.S. interests, not by whether Russia is strong or weak. The goal is not to preserve Russian strength in hopes it becomes a counterweight; the goal is to stop aggression and restore deterrence.

8. Engagement

For Congressional staff and policy professionals: PTSI provides decision-ready ground truth, execution pathways, and public-safe materials to support oversight and implementation. Please feel free to reach out with your requests and questions.